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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: ELECTION SECURITY COOPERATION IMPROVING

REF: A. KABUL 2708
[1](#)B. KABUL 2551
[1](#)C. KABUL 2896
[1](#)D. HOFFMAN-MATA EMAIL

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: Cooperation on voter registration security among the Independent Election Commission (IEC), the Ministry of Interior (MOI), and the Ministry of Defense (MOD) is much improved over its early stumbles (REF A) and the fractious planning of the late summer (REF B.) The security forces are taking on the challenge of opening up districts in Phase 1 provinces where anti-government forces have delayed or shut out voter registration activities. The Afghan National Police operations chief now hosts a weekly coordination meeting, and the operations center based at IEC headquarters will continue to serve as a practical mechanism for identifying and resolving security issues.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Discussion: Daoud Ali Najafi, Chief Technical Officer of the IEC, noted that in mid-October he wrote to the Minister of Interior in exasperation about Ghazni, Wardak, and Logar provinces, where the activities of anti-government fighters have shut out citizens in specific districts from voter registration activity. Najafi is delighted to see that, in response, the Afghan National Police (ANP) and Afghan National Army (ANA) cooperated with coalition forces to organize operations in Ghazni, allowing two troubled districts to open for registration. As in Nuristan province (REF C) and the other Phase one districts (REF D) where security problems and difficult logistics delayed the opening of sites, the IEC will add back days of registration to enfranchise Ghazni voters. An increased security force presence will remain nearby to keep these centers open. Najafi reports that the MOI has promised him additional operations to open the six other districts (four in Ghanzi, one each in Logar and Wardak) where voter registration is unable to take place.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Security planning for the end of Phase 1 and the opening of Phase 2 is progressing well. To ensure the safety of voter registration data, the IEC sent its logistics plan to the MOD on October 26, so that Afghan and international forces can organize the return by air of completed voter registration forms from violence-prone areas. In a unique incident in Kharwar district in Logar, Taliban reportedly burst into a wedding party and tore up the voter registration cards of the guests.

[1](#)4. (SBU) The week of October 20, Najafi consulted directly with the Phase 2 ISAF regional commander, and detailed planning by Phase 2 regional corps commanders is underway. The IEC is cognizant that in Phase 2 Kabul city and province will draw great media attention; while generally optimistic, Najafi believes the two southern districts of Khak-e-Jabbar

and Musahi may be problematic. The IEC also assesses that one district each in Kunduz and Baghlan provinces may have difficulty opening. Chitmal district in Balkh is the first northern, Phase 2 district to report a "night letter" threatening those who participate in voter registration.

15. (SBU) Election officials are adding more outreach to traditional leaders into the mix of the security strategy, an approach that has floated up from the successful initiatives of local IEC staff working in Phase 1. ANP operations chief Colonel Almas, who is an effective, dynamic chair to the weekly MOI-MOD-IEC operations coordination meeting, is enthusiastic about greater public outreach in remote and troubled areas. The IEC is hosting a large gathering of religious leaders in Kabul on November 2, to publicize that these leaders endorse elections as compatible with Islam, including the participation of women. Najafi recently met with two groups of tribal elders from Phase 2 provinces, and the IEC is funding shuras so these groups can rally support. MOI and MOD representatives have agreed to sponsor short public information radio and TV spots about their work on voter registration security.

16. (SBU) Najafi on October 29 proclaimed, "With all the challenges, with all the difficulties, the health of the electoral process is good." IEC field operations chief Raheem Siyal on October 30 pointed to the success of Kunar province, where security forces regularly engage anti-government elements, yet only one voter registration center opened late, due to logistical reasons, and all centers remain open. IEC figures show that as of October 28,

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some 662,855 new voters have joined the rolls, including 244,976 women (37 percent.) The new IEC operations center is tracking and reporting activity daily at the district level, enabling the IEC to quickly address problems as they arise. Najafi is especially proud of the dedication of IEC field employees, who have forged on despite delays in supply deliveries, operational funding, and salary payments. "They pay ahead from their own pockets to solve problems," Najafi said, because they are committed to the democratic process. WOOD